EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING OFFICER JOHN BRUGGER

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the retirement of one of California's finest. Officer John Brugger of the California Highway Patrol is retiring after 31 years of honorable service.

Officer Brugger has spent 21 years of his career in Modesto in my district in California's great Central Valley, including the last 10 as the Public Affairs Officer. During his tenure, Officer Brugger has distinguished himself with the community. Officer Brugger is a Central Valley icon to those learning highway regulations and safety tips.

His many years of service have given him a unique outlook at public safety and a vast resource of examples for his presentations. Additionally, Brugger is a familiar face in many of the community programs involving youth. As a founding member of the Modesto Explorer Scout program, John has been recognized by the California Attorney General for his efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Officer Brugger for his contributions to the community. I also commend him for his courage in putting his life on the line as a California peace officer. It is an honor to call him my friend and I want to wish John and his wife, Linda, the very best as they embark on a new adventure.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to rise and join me in honoring California Highway Patrol Officer John Brugger.

HONORING PATTI JOHNSON

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a real leader in the field of education, Mrs. Patti Johnson, who is leaving the Colorado State Board of Education this coming January. Patti has been an active member of the board since 1995, representing the Second Congressional District of Colorado.

Patti leaves behind a legacy of activism through her tireless work to preserve the rights of parents to control and oversee the education and upbringing of their children. She has been especially effective in dispelling some of the myths associated with psychotropic drugs and the mislabeling of school children, a topic this Congress has addressed many times. In fact, Patti received national recognition when she obtained the successful passage of a resolution before the board encouraging school administrators to use proven academic and classroom management solutions rather than medication to resolve behavior, attention, and learning difficulties.

Additionally, just this past September, Patti came to Washington, DC, to testify before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations at a hearing entitled ''Behavioral Drugs in Schools: Questions and Concerns.'' Mainly due to Patti's testimony, the hearing was a tremendous success, and generated much interest among the public causing members to schedule additional future hearings on behavioral drugs.

Patti has also made other significant contributions to education as a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Education Leaders Council. She is founder and president of Parent's Education Network and served as a mayoral appointee to the Broomfield City Council Ad Hoc Education Committee. Patti's philosophy on education is best exemplified by a statement she made: ''Our schools are the only institution entrusted to attend to the academic needs of our children and their mission must not be diluted. I urge this committee to do everything in its power to get schools out of the business of labeling children and back to the job of teaching.''

Mrs. Patti Johnson's leadership on the board will be sorely missed.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE POET, GWENDOLYN BROOKS

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the great African American poet, Gwendolyn Brooks. She is perhaps the most honored African American poet ever. Her works are strong, powerful, and visual. I was emotionally moved over and over again by her great talent. I insert into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD this tribute to her which appeared in the Washington Post on December 5, 2000.

[From the Washington Post, December 5, 2000]

GWENDOLYN BROOKS, POET NURTURER

(By Jabari Asim)

Gwendolyn Brooks made me skip class. The celebrated poet, who died Sunday night at the age of 83, didn't exactly twist my arm. Still, I felt that the choice between attending interminable lectures and bearing witness to her three-day residency at my college was no choice at all.

Once or twice during my undergraduate days in mid-'80s Chicago, I'd lingered in the background at Haki Madhubuti's intimate South Side bookstore, sneaking peeks at Ms. Brooks while she read from her many volumes. An aspiring poet, I couldn't even bring myself to ask her to sign a book for me, a request freely granted to more courageous souls.

When I heard she was coming to campus, however, I changed my mind. This time I'd see her up close, I resolved. For three glorious days, my other subjects were all but forgotten while I soaked up the poet's wisdom. I still remember her quick, saucy wit, the majestic turban she wore, the gleam of maternal pride that illuminated her cheekbones when she introduced her daughter, Nora. Gracious, patient and fully comfortable in that charged swirl of energetic young minds, she regally held forth on modern poetry, feminism, emerging writers she admired. In a wide-ranging give-and-take with a women's studies class, she even confessed to a fondness for soap operas.

I remember the poems she read, too. ''The Pool Players. Seven at the Golden Shover,'' perhaps her best-known work, acquired a surprisingly caustic edge when she pronounced its short, acerbic lines.

We real cool. We Left school. We
Lurk late. We Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We Thin gin. We
Jazz June, We Die soon.

She was nearing 70 then, and her voice was strong. The last day of her residency, she read before a campus-wide audience, then appeared as honored guest at an evening reception. It was there, amid the brie and wine and tweed, that I summoned all my moxie and introduced myself. I thrust a sheaf of papers at her, poems and stories full of the angst-driven pretentiousness I favored then. We talked a couple of minutes. She was courteous, I was breathless, and I can't recall a word that was said. Less than a week later, I found a note in my mailbox.

''He, Thanks for the opportunity to go through this heavy drama. Richly, exhausting! Have a fine, creative summer! My summer will be devoted to writing—(at last!) Gwen Brooks.''

The words themselves are a model of tact, encouraging but noncommittal. No matter, though: The fact that she's read my work and responded to it was indisputable evidence of my growing brilliance.

I didn't know then that as a teenager, Brooks had sent her poems to Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson, both of whom sent encouraging replies. Nor did I know—despite the scenes that I witnessed at the bookstore—that Brooks made it her business to encourage all young writers. Perhaps the kind, prompt responses she'd received from Hughes and Johnson influenced her to be generous in turn. At the time, I had no interest in deciphering Brooks's motives. All I cared was that I had a handwritten note from the poet laureate of Illinois, the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize for literature.

Brooks's first book, ''A Street in Bronzeville'' (1945), had already won critical acclaim, so she was hardly an unknown entity when her next book, ''Annie Allen,'' claimed the Pulitzer in 1950. Both books were praised for the author's mastery of sonnets, ballads and other traditional European forms. Like Countee Cullen and Claude McKay before her, she knew how to apply such forms to the African American experience and infuse them with desperately needed new energy.

Subsequent books, beginning with ''In the Mecca'' (1968), reflected a change in tone, a more overtly political stance that was often aimed at black readers in particular. For some critics, the change was reason to ignore Brooks's output; for aspiring black writers of subsequent generations, the shift